

TO BARBARA
AND OTHER VERSES

David Starr Jordan



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AND OTHER VERSES

By
David Starr Jordan

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To Barbara's Mother

JESSIE KNIGHT JORDAN

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NOTE

The poems included in this volume are, with the exception of two, reprinted from the author's autobiography, *The Days of a Man*. "The Matterhorn" appeared in *High Lights of Geography: Europe*; "Auld Mither Scotia" was published in *The Overland Monthly*.

TO BARBARA

*Little lady, cease your play
For a moment, if you may;
Come to me, and tell me true
Whence those black eyes came to you.*

*Father's eyes are granite gray,
And your mother's, Barbara,
Black as the obsidian stone,
With a luster all their own.
How should one so small as you
Learn to choose between the two?*

*If through father's eyes you look,
Nature seems an open book —
All her secrets written clear
On her pages round you, dear.*

*Better yet than this may be
If through mother's eyes you see;
Theirs to read — a finer art —
Deep down in the human heart.
How should one so small as you
Choose so well between the two?*

*Hide your face behind your fan,
Little black-eyed Puritan;
Peer across its edge at me
In demurest coquetry,
Like some Doña Plácida,*

*Not the Puritan you are.
Subtle sorcery there lies
In the glances of your eyes,
Calling forth, from out the vast
Vaults of the forgotten past,
Pictures dim and far away
From the full life of today,
Like the figures that we see
Wrought in ancient tapestry.*

*This the vision comes to me:
Sheer rock rising from the sea,
Wind-riven, harsh, and vertical,
To a gray old castle wall;
Waving palms upon its height,
At its feet the breakers white
Chasing o'er an emerald bay
Like a flock of swans that play;
Tile-roofed houses of the town
From the hills, slow-creeping down,
Rocks and palms and castle wall,
Emerald seas that rise and fall,
Golden haze and glittering blue —
What is all of this to you?*

*Only this, perchance it be
Each has left its trace in thee;
Only this, that Love is strong,
And the arm of Fate is long.*

*Deeply hidden in your eyes,
Undeciphered histories*

*Graven in the ages vast,
Lie there to be read at last:
Graven deep, they must be true;
Shall I read them unto you?*

*Once a man, now faint and dim
With the centuries over him,
Wandered from an ancient town
On its hills slow-creeping down;
O'er the ocean, bold and free,
Roved in careless errantry.
With Vizcaino had he fared,
And his strange adventures dared;
Restless ever, drifting on,
Far as foot of man had gone;
On his cheek the salt that clings
To the Headland of the Kings,
Flung from the enchanted sea
Of Saint Francis Assisi!
Rover o'er the ocean blue —
What has he to do with you?*

*Only this: he sailed one day
To your Massachusetts Bay,
And this voyage was his last,
For Love seized and held him fast.
Of that old romance of his
None can tell you more than this, —
Saving that, as legacies
To his child, he left his eyes
Black as the obsidian stone*

*With a luster all their own,
Seeing as by magic ken
Deep into the hearts of men.
And mid tides of changing years,
Dreams and hopes and cares and fears,
Life that flows and ebbs alway,
Love has kept them loyally.
Once, it chanced, they came to shine
Straight into this heart of mine.*

*Little lady, cease your play
For a moment, if you may;
All I ask is, silently,
Turn your mother's eyes on me!*

Consulado Inglés, Calle de las Olas Altas, Mazatlán, Sinaloa
January 10, 1895

VIVÉROLS¹

*Somewhere in France, I know not where,
There is a town called "Vivérois";
I know not if 'tis near or far,
I know not what its features are,
I only know 'tis Vivérois.*

*I know not if its ancient walls
By vine and moss be overgrown;
I know not if the night owl calls
From feudal battlements of stone
Inhabited by him alone;*

*I know not if mid meadow lands
Knee deep in corn stands Vivérois;
I know not if prosperity
Has robbed its life of poesy;
That could not be in Vivérois,
They would not call it Vivérois.*

*Perchance upon its terraced heights
The grapes grow purple in the sun;
Or down its wild untrodden crags,
Its broken cliffs and frost-bit jags,
The mountain brooks unfettered run.*

¹ At the special request of Edmund Clarence Stedman this poem appeared in his "American Anthology." There the first line, originally written as here given, was changed by me to

"Beyond the sea, I know not where."

*I cannot fancy Vivérois
A place of gaudy pomp and show,
A "Grand Établissement des Eaux"
Where to restore their withered lives
The roués of the city go;*

*Nor yet a place where Poverty
No ray of happiness lets in;
Where lingers hopeless beggary
Mid scenes of sorrow, want, and sin;
That could not be in Vivérois,
There's life and cheer in Vivérois!*

*Perchance among the clouds it lies
Mid vapors out from Dreamland blown,
Built up from vague remembrances
That never yet had form in stone, —
Its castles built of cloud alone.*

*I only know, should thou and I,
Through its gray walls of crumbling stone
Together wander, all alone,
No spot on earth could be more fair
Than ivy-covered Vivérois!
No grass be greener anywhere,
No bluer sky or softer air
Than we should find in Vivérois,
Together find in Vivérois.*

*Love, we may wander far or near,
The sun shines bright o'er Vivérois;*

*Green is the grass, the skies are clear,
No cloud obstructs our pathway, dear;
Where love is, there is Vivérois —
There is no other Vivérois!*

A CASTLE IN SPAIN

*There stands a castle in the heart of Spain,
Built of stone, as if to stand for aye,
With tile-roof red against the azure sky;
And skies are bluest in the heart of Spain.*

*Castle so stately men build not again;
'Neath its broad arches, in its patio fair,
And through its cloisters, open everywhere,
I wander as I will, in sun or rain.
Its inmost secret unto me is known,
For mine the castle is. Nor mine alone —
'Tis thine, O Love, to have and hold alway;
'Tis all the world's as well as mine and thine;
For whoso enters its broad gate shall say:
"I dwell within this castle: it is mine."*

SANTA CLARA VIRGEN Y MÁRTIR

*Now that the throng has left me,
I softly close my eyes,
And one by one before me
The fairest visions rise, —
The best that Life can give me
Of all Life signifies.*

*I see a sunlit valley
Between two mountain chains,
Where roses bloom and lilies
Along the grassy lanes
Aflame with golden poppies
And wet with fragrant rains.*

*I see from purple mountains
The lengthening shadows creep,
Touching the lanes of poppies,
Closing their eyes in sleep;
And Earth's uneasy clamor
Is hushed in silence deep.*

*Again, through sprays of jasmine,
A woman's face I see;
I care not what her beauty
Or her attractions be —
There may be many fairer
But none so fair to me.*

*Again, a gentle lady
Who lived in other days,*

*A virgin and a martyr —
So the old legend says —
Who in her name enfoldeth
Delicious destinies.*

*O blessèd Santa Clara!
Her spell be over thee,
To keep thee bright and joyous
As all her roses be;
May her sweet influence cover
The hours 'twixt thee and me.*

SINALOA

I

*I dream of gray rocks rising rough and sheer
Above the trembling azure of the sea;
Of long green lines of waves that listlessly
Break in slow foam, then slip away in fear —
Or hide themselves in rock-pools, crystal clear.*

*I dream of long white paths that from the sea
Climb the gray Mother Range unwillingly
Through straggling ranks of palms and pines austere
To lands of Summer where slow days go by,
Each as it must, but most reluctantly;
Of black mantillas that but seem to hide
Dark eyes undarkened by the darkest night.
All this my dream — but ever by my side
Thou with the midnight eyes by love made bright.*

II

*We stand tonight on an enchanted shore;
The warm, slow pulse of the great Summer Sea
Rises and falls the night long, ceaselessly,
Beating its one grand rhythm evermore.
See where before us the stark moonlight falls
On Isla Blanca's bare volcanic walls —
Some shapeless monster breaking from the deep,
Lashing the waves in rising from his sleep!
Yonder in open ocean, hand in hand,
In solemn row, the three Venados stand,*

*Vast and impossible in moonbeams white,
As they were "Flying Islands of the Night."*

*Here Cerro Cruz her iron cross uplifts,
Triumphant over her resistant cliffs;
Beside her armed Vijía, dim and dun,
Guarding the harbor with her single gun;
Low at their feet, half hid in sea-mists gray,
Shine far the four stars of the Cross of May;
Beyond the headland with its palm tree lone,
Flashes the beacon-light of tall Creston —
The last and haughtiest of the craggy horde
Sierra Madre thrusts forth oceanward.*

*Behind us lies the town in slumber deep,
And all unrestless — as to thee and me
Man and his strivings now had ceased to be,
Or by some spell were bound in endless sleep,
Leaving us only on enchanted ground,
Alone together, where there comes no sound
Save the slow pulse-throb of the tropic sea
In the white moonlight beating steadily.*

III

*Perchance, dear heart, it may be thou and I,
In some far azure of infinity,
Shall find together an enchanted shore
Where Life and Death and Time shall be no more,
Leaving Love only and Eternity.
For Love shall last, though all else pass away,
The harsh taskmaster that we call Today,*

*Till each concession Time from Life has wrung
Like outworn garments from the Soul be flung,
And it shall stand, with back no longer bent,
Slave to the lash of its environment!
Then this great earth we know shall shrink at last
To some bare Isla Blanca of the past —
A rock unnoted in the boundless sea
Whose solemn pulse-beat marks Eternity.*

KOMANDORSKI

*Sail I o'er the icy sea
Where the twin Storm-Islands be,
In a British man-o'-war
(Cold and hard her bulwarks are)
Far to where the haughty North
Sends his eager minions forth
Tugging at the tawny manes
Of deep-sunken mountain chains,
Great ships greeting with a laugh,
Tossing them about like chaff;
Never they since tides began
Tamed to let or call of man.*

*Komandorski, grim, defiant,
Stands before them like a giant,
Flinging to the Ocean Chiefs
The stern gauntlet of his reefs.*

*Crest on crest redoubtable,
Prone at Tolstoi's feet they fall,
And their haughty hosts become
Impotent in angry foam;
While the sea-mists, cold and gray,
Whirl their shredded ghosts away
High to where the storm-clouds be,
The Valhalla of the Sea!*

*And I watch them as I lie,
Tossing ever helplessly,*

*In the British man-o'-war
(Cold as steel her bulwarks are).
Through the porthole from the shore
Comes the deep, sonorous roar,
As on Bering's reefs the surges
Chant the great Commander's dirges.*

*Then, within the sordid gloom
Of my little cabin-room —
All at once — a presence rare
Lights the unexpectant air.
Thou art gazing full at me,
Thou who art the world to me;
Eyes I have the right to miss,
Lips I have the right to kiss;
All that generous Life has brought me,
All there is sweet Love has taught me
Smiles at me from yonder wall —
Glances, smiles, and that is all!*

*What to me the haughty North?
What his minions rushing forth?
What the huge inchoate ghosts
Of his ever vanquished host?
What the mighty battle-shocks
On grim Komandorski's rocks?
What the moaning of the sea,
Troubled from eternity?
What though cold the bulwarks are
In the British man-o'-war?
Thou, dear heart, hast been with me!*

*Thou who art the world to me!
What sweet necromancy brought
Thus the vision of my thought
O'er these thousand leagues at sea?*

*Thus it chanced — in gathering night
Just one wisp of rosy light,
Strayed from — none can tell you where —
Through the tangling ghosts of air,
From some sunset, it may be,
On the far Kamchatkan Sea,
Through the trailing robes and gray
Of the mists along its way,
Till it, slant and flutteringly,
Fell athwart my porthole here,
Rested on thy picture, dear.*

*And I bless the wisp of light,
And I bless thy sweet Good Night!*

CAPE CHEERFUL

“When you shall come to a great cliff standing northward from Makushin the Volcano, and rent almost from base to summit and from the midst of which leaps the tumultuous Waterfall sheer into the Sea, then, the fog lifting, you will leave the cliff well to Starboard, and enter a land-locked haven called ‘Captain’s Harbor,’ for that I did once ride out the winter there. Whence is this Headland with the Waterfall called ‘Cape Cheerful.’”
(Logbook attributed to Captain Cook.)

*Homeward bound from the Storm-Islands,¹ through the
sullen Icy Sea,*

On our lee

*Rise the savage, swart Smoke-Islands,² which defy
Sea and Sky,*

*Hurling back the waves insistent from their boulder-
cumbered shore,*

Evermore;

*As though shattering the cloud rack, dark and tall,
Like a wall,*

*And the twin Smoke-Islands vanish as a specter of the night
From our sight,*

*While the ship still plunges onward, fog-bound in the Icy
Sea.*

Suddenly,

*As the light is slowly failing, — the long twilight of the
North, —*

Rises forth,

*As though shattering the cloud rack, dark and tall,
The granite wall*

*Of the shapeless huge Moss-Island³ with her earthquake-
riven cliff;*

Through the rift,

¹ Komandorski.

² Bogoslof.

³ Unalaska.

*Like a swift-spun skein of silver springs intact
The cataract,
From the riven lava buttress far into the Icy Sea;
Joyfully
Does it join the tumbling billows, while its spray
Drifts away
With the east wind to the leeward. Banished now is every
fear,
All is clear;
For we know the Cape called Cheerful, and it tells the haven
near.*

*Like the fog-bound northern ocean is the weary course of life:
Doubt and strife
Hide the way I fain would follow; can I know
What to do?
Slowly down my path I wander, sore perplexed,
Spirit-vexed,
By the cloud rack of conventions o'er us all
Like a pall.
Thus, with downcast eyes and somber, come I to the garden-
gate;
Swift and straight,
Leaping from a bank of roses, like a fetterless cascade,
Unafraid,
Rush the children forth to greet me, with a joyous shout of
cheer;
Banished now is all convention, all vexation and contention,
All is clear;
I have found the "Cape called Cheerful," and I know the
haven near.*

Off Unalaska, September, 1897

I HEARD A LARK

*I heard a lark in Heaven sing;
He was not saying anything.
No words perhaps had he to say,
And he was very far away.
Yet she who heard him knew for truth,
Knew that he sang of Love and Youth,
Each note as fresh and all unworn
As on Creation's natal morn.
Nothing is old and nothing new,
For Life began with Me and You.*

*I would that I in such a strain
Might sing my song to you again,
In newborn language clothe my art,
Some Esperanto of the heart,
Each note as fresh and all unworn
As if each tone were newly born.*

*But clumsily I do my part
In words worn smooth beyond repair,
Their angles rounded everywhere
Through usage in the common mart.
The Lark seems nearer Heaven than I,
I cannot voice his ecstasy.*

*And yet to you my song I bring;
I am not saying anything, —
My words are old and dull and gray,
They yield me nothing new to say;*

*But you who listen know, forsooth,
Know that I sing of Love and Youth,
Of Love that grants Eternal Youth!*

KAWEAH IN TULARE

*Across Tulare, in the early morning,
The western trades blow free,
Bearing above us in huge broken masses
The white mists from the sea.*

*Through wastes of sand, green-fringed with oaks and willows,
The swift Kaweah goes,
Down to the thirsty basin of Tulare,
Which never overflows.*

*Its current mingles with the milk-white waters
Of the great silent lake,
Which, to receive it, through its guard of tules,
An opening seems to make.*

*O'er the dark foothills rise the calm Sierras,
Flushed with the morning red:
From their slow-melting snow-fields the Kaweah,
An infant stream, is fed.*

*Its winding course, rock-walled by cliff and canyon,
I trace in dim outline,
Through flecks of cloud between the silent summits
And the dark shades of pine.*

*My spirit wanders to those far recesses;
I scent the fragrant air,
Filtered from glaciers pure, through sun-warmed meshes
Of pine-leaves everywhere.*

*I seem to see the granite cliffs uprising
Like mighty castle walls;
And in the breeze, as snow-white banners waving,
The foamy waterfalls.*

*From each dark cleft, half hid in fern and aspen,
Their music comes to me,
With the one song the pine tree's ever singing
Blended in harmony.*

*O river glorious in the mountain canyon,
Where thy fair birth is placed!
O river sad, whose waves are lost and swallowed,
In alkali and waste!*

*O glorious youth, by wondrous dreams surrounded
With fragrance, light, and life!
O sad old age, whose force is dissipated
In idle, aimless strife!*

*My life I see, as mirrored in the river, —
This only may I know,
'Tis hastening onward toward the Lake of Silence
Whose waters ne'er o'erflow.*

*The river's windings once again I follow,
Across the desert bare,
By lines of grateful oaks and bending willows,
Which tell the water there.*

*Along the margin sweetest flowers are springing,
The birds sing in the trees;
Where'er the river goes is life and verdure —
The desert vanishes.*

*Dear heart, if so my life be like the river,
Its fate be mine;
Let it flow on, its banks be green forever, —
What matter, oak or pine?*

IN TEHÁCHAPI

Cold is the wind upon the mountain side
(For she, — my lady, — she is far from me),
White is the snow and thick the mists that hide
Thy face, Teháchapi!

Stiffly the yuccas stand in mantles white
(Garments unwonted, carried shiveringly),
While desert cactus, sands, and storm unite,
Blending impartially.

But not forever lingers Winter here
(For there is always Summer in the heart),
The south wind whispers, and the hills are clear,
The thick fog falls apart.

The Summer's gentle touch shall never fail
(Because, — my lady, — she will come to me),
Blue are the skies beyond the mists that veil
Thy face, Teháchapi!

1892

MADAME DÉLICIEUSE

*I know she's coming, and the air around me
Is warm and bright:
The little room is full to overflowing
With softest light.*

*No more the shadow of the winter lingers
Across my heart;
For at the magic hidden in her fingers
The clouds dispart.*

*Now Care and Faction cannot come to vex me;
Mine is the key
That locks the door to all unrest and passion
While Life shall be.*

1887

IN A WEEK OF SUNDAYS

*In a week of Sundays,
In a year of Mays,
In a life o'erflowing
With fair holidays,*

*Sit beside me, sweetheart;
Touch my hand once more,
And the days shall ever
Follow as before, —*

*Every day a Sunday
Every month a June,
Every night and morning
Blessèd afternoon!*

MEN TOLD ME, LORD
(1851-1921)

*Men told me, Lord, it was a vale of tears
Where Thou hadst placed me, wickedness and woe
My twain companions whereso I might go;
That I through ten and threescore weary years
Should stumble on, beset by pains and fears,
Fierce conflict round me, passions hot within,
Enjoyment brief and fatal, but in sin.
When all was ended, then should I demand
Full compensation from Thine austere hand;
For, 'tis Thy pleasure, all temptation past,
To be not just but generous at last.*

*Lord, here am I, my threescore years and ten
All counted to the full; I've fought Thy fight,
Crossed Thy dark valleys, scaled Thy rocks' harsh height,
Borne all the burdens Thou dost lay on men
With hand unsparing, threescore years and ten.
Before Thee now I make my claim, O Lord!
What shall I pray Thee as a meet reward?*

*I ask for nothing! Let the balance fall!
All that I am or know or may confess
But swells the weight of mine indebtedness;
Burdens and sorrows stand transfigured all;
Thy hand's rude buffet turns to a caress,
For Love, with all the rest, Thou gav'st me here,
And Love is Heaven's very atmosphere!
Lo, I have dwelt with Thee, Lord, let me die;
I could do no more, through all Eternity!*

“ECCE HOMO”

*There was a man who saw God face to face:
His countenance and vestments evermore
Glowed with a light that never shone before,
Saving from him who saw God face to face.
And men, anear him for a little space,
Were sorely vexed at the unwonted light.
Those whom the light did blind rose angrily;
They bore his body to a mountain height
And nailed it to a tree; then went their way,
And he resisted not nor said them nay,
Because that he had seen God face to face.*

*There was a man who saw Life face to face;
And ever as he walked from day to day,
The deathless mystery of being lay
Plain as the path he trod in loneliness;
And each deep-hid inscription could he trace;
How men have fought and loved and fought again;
How in lone darkness souls cried out for pain;
How each green foot of sod from sea to sea
Was red with blood of men slain wantonly;
How tears of pity warm as summer rain
Again and ever washed the stains away,
Leaving to Love, at last, the victory.
Above the strife and hate and fever pain,
The squalid talk and walk of sordid men,
He saw the vision changeless as the stars
That shone through temple gates or prison bars,
Or to the body nailed upon the tree,
Through each mean action of the life that is,
The marvel of the Life that yet shall be.*

ALTRUISM

*The God of things that are
Is the God of the highest heaven;
The God of the morning star,
Of the thrush that sings at even;
The God of the storm and sunshine,
Of the wolf, the snail, and the bee,
Of the Alps' majestic silence,
Of the soundless depths of the sea;*

*The God of the times and the nations,
Of the planets as they roll,
Of the numberless constellations,
Of the limitless human soul.
For there is nothing small,
And naught can mighty be;
Archangels and atoms all —
Embodiments of Thee!*

*A single thought divine
Holds stars and suns in space;
A dream of man is Thine,
And history finds its place;
When the universe was young,
Thine was the Perfect Thought
That life should be bound in one
By the strand of Love enwrought.*

*In the life of the fern and the lily,
Of the dragon and the dove,*

*Still through the stress and struggle
Waxes the bond of love.
Out from the ruthless ages
Rises, like incense mild,
The love of the man and the woman,
The love of the mother and child.*

November, 1896

THE BUBBLES OF SAKI

*In sweet, sad cadence Persian Omar sings
The life of man that lasts but for a day —
A phantom caravan that hastes away
On to the chaos of Insensate Things.*

*"The Eternal Saki from that bowl hath poured
Millions of bubbles like us, and shall pour," —
The life of man, a half-unspoken word,
A fleck of foam tossed on an unknown shore.*

*"When you and I behind the veil are past,
Oh! but the long, long while the world shall last;
Which of our coming and departure heeds,
As the Seven Seas shall heed a pebble cast."*

*"Ah, my beloved, fill the cup that clears
Today of past regrets and future fears";
This is the only wisdom man can know —
"I come like water, and like wind I go."*

*But tell me, Omar, hast thou said the whole?
If such the bubbles that fill Saki's bowl,
How great is Saki, whose least whisper calls
Forth from the swirling mists a human soul!*

*Omar, one word of thine is but a breath,
A single cadence in thy perfect song,
And, as its measures softly flow along,
A million syllables pass on to death.*

*Shall this one word withdraw itself in scorn
Because 'tis not thy first nor last nor all —
Because 'tis not the sole breath thou hast drawn,
Nor yet the sweetest word thy lips let fall?*

*I do rejoice that when "of me and thee"
Men talk no longer, yet not less but more
The Eternal Saki still that bowl shall fill,
And ever stronger, fairer bubbles pour;*

*A humble note in the Eternal Song,
The Perfect Singer hath made place for me,
And not one atom in Earth's wondrous throng
But shall be needful to Infinity.*

April, 1896

WHEN MAN SHALL RISE

*When man shall rise to manhood's destiny,
When our slow-toddling race shall be full-grown,
Deep in each human heart a chamber lone
Of Holies Holiest shall builded be;*

*And each man for himself must hold the key;
Each there must kindle his own altar-fires,
Each burn an offering of his own desires,
And each at last his own High Priest must be.*

A DARKENING SKY

*A darkening sky and a whitening sea,
And a wind in the palm trees tall;
Soon or late comes the call for me,
Down from the mountain or up from the sea,
Then let me lie where I fall.*

*And a friend may write, for friends there be,
On a stone from the dark sea wall,
"Jungle and town and reef and sea,
I have loved God's earth, and God's earth loved me,
Take it for all in all!"*

Tutuila, Samoa, 1897

O FREEDOM, I HAD DREAMED

*O Freedom, I had dreamed that thou wert dying,
Thy banner Lincoln, once, and Franklin bore
As Milton, Pym, and Hampden had before;
Low in the dust I seemed to see it lying,
And they who bore its sacred staff were trying
From its fair folds to frame a sutler's tent,
And thou unconscious while its web they rent.*

IN THE WILDERNESS¹

Phi Beta Kappa Poem. (May, 1913)

I

*I stand as in a dream within a wood,
A forest crass, men call "The Wilderness,"
Of ill-grown oak trees and stunt, scanty pines,
With sumacs dun and huddling sassafras,
Enmeshed with brambles rude and tangling vines, —
Its mossy brooksides blue with violets,
Its red soil ever redder with men's hurt.
Men named this forest once "the Poisoned Woods,"
And it was poisoned by the wrath of man,
'Twas trebly poisoned by the flames of Hell
That burned through every corner of the wood.*

*Out from the forest, as in nightmare dream,
Out from its straggling trees and struggling vines,
Out from its red soil, redder with men's hurt,
From ravaged banksides blue with violets,
From withering venom of its flames of Hell,
I see a sad procession creeping down,
Full seven miles of maimed and broken men,
Full seven miles of ghastly shapes of men
Pouring like vomit from the Wilderness;
Out from the pious shades of Salem Church,
Out from the Catherine Furnace on the hill,
From sparse farmhouses saturate with dread,
Field hospitals of gruesome awfulness,
Where women, war-crazed, neither knew nor recked*

¹ Of Spotsylvania County, Virginia.

*Of their own children if alive or dead,
From Sunlight's enfilade where Sedgwick fell,
The Bloody Angle, by McCool's sweet spring,
From the old wayside inn whose awful name
Men spoke in bated whispers — Chancellorsville!
In its green paddock, leading toward the ford
Of Rappahannock and of Rapidan,
Amidst the peach trees' rosy blossoming,
About the whitewashed shanties of the slaves,
The ground was piled thrice deep with wrecks of men
Living and dying — things which once were men,
The Blue — the Red — commingled with the Gray!
The blazing inn an awesome funeral pyre.*

*Men tell us how the angry sun went down
A bloodshot disk upon a shrinking sky;
And then uprose the great white Maytime moon,
Flooding the forest with her patient light
Till Horror paled in dumb forgetfulness.*

*Shall we not ask in contrite humbleness:
Can we give praise to Lord of Heaven, or Hell,
For aught men did here in the wilderness?*

II

*Down in yon somber hollow Jackson fell,
His red hand raised in worship, to the last
Austere, devoted, of his Duty sure,
For States make Duty of the wrath of man,
Imputing Righteousness to deeds abhorred.*

*"The soldier has no Duty save to die."
And is this Duty, that he thus should die?
Are nations built on bones of mangled men?
Have bonds of union no cement save blood?
"Obedience to the Law before all Time!"
But then is such obedience supreme,
Brought to fulfillment through red-handed rage?
"The brave makes Danger, Opportunity."
Is there no danger save from cannonades?
Is there no hardier, craftier foe than this
Whose strength is measured by a saber-thrust?
The path to Justice between man and man
Must lead through strife, but not through pools of blood,
The clash of will, but not the crush of men.
"But War's fierce furnace melts the chains of slaves;
Its march obliterates old vested wrongs;
Foul Bastiles crumble at its trumpet call,
And tyrants gasp at serried hosts of men.
War's candent fire-bath purifies the state,
War's furnace-heat the bond of union welds.
Shall not war bring the great Enfranchisement,
The freedom from all shackles of the Past?"*

*He reaps dire harvest who sows dragon's teeth!
When Law is silent, anarchy murder rules;
Law is humanity's consummate flower,
And Love is the fulfillment of the Law;
Its blind and brute denial, that is War.
The Laws of War! In war, there is no law.
Where war is not, there and there only — Law.*

*Where armies quarter, thorns and thistles grow.
New wrongs spring ever in the wake of war,
From their hot ashes mount up fresh Bastiles;
The Sutler camps on the Avenger's trail;
The Mailed Fist is but a burglar's tool;
Gross cities swell with loot of great campaigns,
The Vulture gorges where the Eagle strikes.*

*And each fresh slaughter dwarfs the breed of men —
The Unreturning ever were the Brave!*

*Nothing enduring yet in wrath was wrought;
No noble deed in hatred; in all time
The Master Builder works in soberness;
A world which reeked with wars, and reeks again,
The Prince of Peace in patience re-creates.*

*Oh, take away the frippery of war,
Its zest for glory, its mouth-filling lies,
Its rippling colors and resounding drums,
Its chargers, bannerets, and bugle calls,
Its heady wine of music and acclaim
That make a slaughter seem a holiday!
Oh, take away the sanction of the State,
That haloes murder with a holy light,
That makes our common hate seem Wrath Divine,
And thunderous shoutings as the voice of God.*

III

*I do remember in the far-off years
Through the long twilight of the August nights
(The nights of half a century ago),*

*I waited for my brother whom I loved, —
I waited for my brother, and he came, —
Came but in dreams and never came again,
For he was with the Sisterhood of Fate —
Man is; Man is not; Man shall never be.*

IV

*How like a chasm yawns our history!
Still figures pour out from the Poisoned Wood;
I seem to see them on their fated way,
I seem to see them creep from death to death,
Full seven miles of crushed and wasted men,
Full seven miles of tattered shreds of men,
Some dazed with blood, not knowing what they do,
Rising to fall, and falling not to rise.
Whither they go ——— What matter? They must go!
If there be ghosts, they hover o'er this road;
If they be ghosts, they fill this Poisoned Wood!*

*Perchance no spirits wander of the slain,
For these are sleeping in the woodland glade,
The Blue for aye unsevered from the Gray.
Under that Flag where Hatred dies away
They rest as men may rest whose work is done,
The Horror lost in blest forgetfulness.
For they are with the Sisterhood of Fate —
Man is; Man is not; Man shall never be.*

*Yet there be ghosts here, ghosts that haunt for aye!
Rising forever from the Poisoned Wood,
The Slain Unnumbered; those who, still unborn,*

*Through wistful ages never to be born,
Never may answer to their country's call;
The long, sad roll that lengthens with the years,
The sweet life wasted, widening with the years;
Those who have lived not, never yet can live;
Their fathers slumber in the Wilderness,
While these are with the Sisterhood of Fate —
Man is; Man is not; Man shall never be.*

Shall God not fill another universe
With Life we waste in wicked wantonness?

TO MELVILLE BEST ANDERSON IN FLORENCE, 1912 ¹

I

*Good friend, your message comes to me
Far-tost across a winter's sea,
And once again, as in a dream,
In your Etruscan town I seem.
Once more in sunset's reddening haze
San Miniato's spire's ablaze.
The last long rays slow fade away
On thy gray hills, Fiésolé!
Once more across these thirty years,
Rich with their shimmering hopes and fears,
Beyond our Santa Clara's dales
I see your Arno's winding vales,
Gorged with the laurel-green and pine,
Slip from the "wind-grieved Apennine."
While still upon my garden wall
Thick leaves of Vallombrosa fall.*

II

*O regal city of the flowers!
What glory thine! What fortune ours!
Thou wert the home of deeds divine,
The chosen of the ages thine.
Thine, austere poets who could tell
The inmost truths of Heaven and Hell.
Thy grim old sophist pulled the strings
That shift the destinies of kings.*

¹ Then (1912) resident in Florence. Written in answer to his poem, *La Capponcina*, an appreciation of the city.

*Thine, artists who on canvas wrought
The fairest forms that men have sought.
Thine, Cimabue's first approach,
Thine, Raphael with the silken touch,
Thine, sweet girl-faces that we know —
The loves of Fra Angelico.
Thine, Vinci, humanest of men,
His like no world shall see again.
Sculptors and painters come and go,
And still supreme thine Angelo!
Thine those who, mastering lands and times,
Wrote deathless themes in jagged rhymes.
Here in thy Duomo unafraid
Thy great evangelist has prayed.
There is no gift time can bestow
That thou, O Florence, dost not know!*

III

*Lorenzo's city, can it be
Thou livest but in history?
Are all the glories of thy race
Dissolved in sordid commonplace?
Seek'st thou on an unfriendly shore
The petty pillage of the Moor?
O Florence! thou shalt rise again,
Thy deeds once more be deeds of men!
Such real men the ages know
Crowded thy Ponte Vecchio —
Not stage-struck singers of the day
With "endless dirges to decay."*

*Even thy Ghibelline and Guelph
Lusted for power and not for pelf.*

IV

*Can Time's revenges farther go!
From Dante to D'Annunzio!
By poesy — O wondrous trade —
Camp braggarts into heroes made!
Such "thin red lines of heroes" flow
Where once trod Fra Girólamo!
What loftiest cause has fallen lower,
Down to Sonnino from Cavour?
To what base uses may we come
Catspawing to the Bank of Rome!
To turn away from storied lands
To wallow in the desert sands
And filch from sword-gashed Arabs, then,
The plunder of the Saracen!*

V

*No, Florence, no, this shall not be!
By thy majestic history,
By all thy lives of ancient worth,
By all the fairest forms on earth,
By all the memories we bear,
By Casa Guidi's casements rare,
By all that calls men's souls to thee
O'er snow-dashed Alp or storm-swept sea!
Thine was the spirit once which broke
Age-long obsession, which awoke
Old warring Europe from its strife*

*To thoughts of art, to acts of life.
Let "Africa's dried leaf" remain;
To thine own self come back again!*¹

- ¹ A year later (in a defense of Italy) Anderson wrote:
"Bloody the hue Di Ciataglia's bivouac lend
Unto the waning Star of Bethlehem;
Bravely you thrust your beacon forth, but then
It only shows how dark the night, dear friend!"

TO MELVILLE BEST ANDERSON, ON THE COMPLETION
OF HIS AND DANTE'S "DIVINA COMMEDIA," 1922

L'INFERNO

*Two poets only write in TERZA RIMA,
And on their trail I follow hard today.
Hard, I repeat, for 'tis a crafty scheme — a
Plan to promote an everflowing lay,
For there's no way to stop when all is said;
The wildering triplets writhe on ceaselessly.*

*But wait, I have a most congenial Thema, —
My welcome task a fragrant wreath to lay,
And I must hasten lest its perfume shed.
A scene historic clings in memory;
By Arno's bank, six centuries ago,
A poet stood in noble dignity,
A crown of Laurel o'er his graying hair
And at his feet the Mighty of the Day!
With sainted Beatrice bending down,
Embrasured in celestial balcony!*

*My rôle though humble is yet most sincere, —
In loving friendship, trust me, it is done;
Though Pennyroyal mine, instead of Bay,
I venture where mere angels fear to tread,
And on your brow I wreathe it, Anderson!*

IL PURGATORIO

*I mind me of a broadly ample plain —
Its undulations stretching far and wide —*

*Verdant beneath revivifying rain,
Yet undistinguished all; from side to side,
Amidst fatiguing uniformity,
Mole-hill and ant-hill petty men have tried
To build as if in futile rivalry.
Lo, in the distance rises broad and tall
(By storied Nilus sprawling turbidly)
A giant massive which the sages call
The Pyramid of Cheops, unexcelled
In its chaste grandeur, overtopping all,
Which through the aeons men have ever held
The emblem of perfection. Let it be
A symbol of the homage we may yield
To Genius on the plains of Poesy,
Midst mole- and ant-hill poetasters planned,
The Dismalcy of Mediocrity!*

*Thus towering Dante, in whose austere hand
Divinest secrets all unveiled lie,
As from a dominating pyramid
Looks down upon each flitting century,
And nothing from his searchant gaze is hid;
Ecstatic visions granted him alone!
Far glimpses of the Everlasting Love!*

*But "syllables that breathe of the Sweet South,"
A speech our race has not inherited,
Are ill-befitting to a Northern mouth;
His inmost meaning to us all unknown
Or felt but vaguely till to him we climb,—
No slight adventure, for we find, in truth,*

*Acute the angles, smooth the polished stone
Wrought in firm masonry of triple rhyme.*

IL PARADISO

*To thee, my friend, the lifelong task was given
To lift us to the apex where alone
Is held the key to open Hell and Heaven;
A staircase hast thou builded, broad and fair,
Of rough-hewn blocks of Saxon granite riven,
On which we climb through circumambient air
O'er ant-hill, mole-hill, toward the very stars,
Where in far lucent azure swims the vast
Perspective of great Dante's Universe!*

BELGIUM

*Land of long days of happiness,
Of pale gray skies and windmills tall, —
Wide is the world, and thou art small,
But yet we love thee none the less.*

*Land of sweet bells and faith serene,
Of solemn sunset calls to prayer
Brooding above the darkened air —
(But sweet bells jangle at Malines).*

*By fair Liège, whose storied dead
Sleep in her great cathedral's nave,
The Meuse rolls on, with glittering wave —
(Lo! her green current turns to red).*

*At Bruges the belfry tells its tale
Of days when ugliness was crime,
And bids us hark the ancient chime —
(I only hear a child's low wail).*

*Namur o'erlooks fair lands outspread
Where hamlets of Brabant are seen
Standing knee-deep in meadows green —
(Soft — 'tis a new-made grave you tread).*

*At Ghent the great bell Roland tolls
Where through six centuries long the tower
Has summoned freemen to their hour —
(It mourns a thousand passing souls).*

*And old Louvain, Louvain the wise,
Hugs to her breast the precious store
Forgathered of our ancient lore —
(But hungry flames fill all her skies).*

*And Ostend, by the gray North Sea,
Dreams of her ancient hardihood;
(A sea more grim, of steel and blood,
Surges behind her ceaselessly).*

*Howe'er the tide of battle roll,
There bides what none can burn or raze —
The Flemish spirit of old days,
The ageless freedom of the soul.*

*Land of long days of frightfulness,
For faith and honor crucified,
Though thou art small, and earth is wide,
We still shall love thee none the less.*

TO LADY ALICE COURTENAY ¹

*I have seen thy name today,
Lady Alice Courteney,
As a treasure brought to me
From the mines of history.
'Tis a stately Norman name
Of a fair and stately dame,
And the picture that it brings
Of long-vanished stately things
Comes to me as keen and clear
As a painted miniature.*

*As I gaze, they pass away,
All the vistas of today,
All the battles I have fought,
All the deeds my hands have wrought,
All the golden light that fills
Sunny Santa Clara's hills!*

*Unsubstantial as a dream
Does my lone mist-island seem,
With its flower-bespangled moss
Wet by wayward waves that toss*

¹ (Alice, daughter of Pierre — by courtesy Lord of Courtenay, son of Louis VI, "le Gros," a descendant of Charlemagne — and Isabella de Courtenay, heiress of the estates of Devon, by marrying Aymar (Edmund) de Taillefer, lord of Angoulême, a descendant of the swordsmith

"Taillefer who sang

Till the hills of Hastings rang,"

became mother of Isabel de Taillefer, wife of King John and thus ancestress of a series of kings, and of a long line of Cavaliers and Puritans in England and America, whereof the end is not yet.

Courtenay, a town in Île de France, is the original home of the Courteney forebears, said to be of Danish descent.)

*Flotsam from the farthest lands
Over Zoltoï's shining sands;
Still the cold gray cloud above,
Sleep-cap of the Pribilof!*

*Now in trailing mist and spray,
Let the great globe fade away,
(All that is, become as naught
In the vagrant world of thought)
Cast off seven hundred years,
With their load of hopes and fears,
And a fragrance comes to me,
Rose leaves pressed in history,
Sweetly strange and strangely sweet;
Lady Alice, may it be
I am here alone with thee?
Let me kneel, then, at thy feet.
Ghosts from ghosts have naught to fear,
White the hand I kiss, my dear!*

*Thus I pass thy guarded gate
Where thy mailed retainers wait;
They will neither know nor care,
For I tread with feet of air
To thy walls of cold gray stone
Where the daylight never shone,
Dismal halls that ne'er could be
Sun-illumined save by thee!*

*I can see thee decked for show
In the robes of long ago,
Brocades rich as tapestry,*

*Laces, silks, and jewelry —
All the far-sought finery
Men have fancied meet for thee.
Roses bloom along thy way,
(Thou a fairer rose than they)
Pink-tipped daisies from the grass
Nod their welcome as you pass;
In the cornfields here and there
Scarlet poppies flame and flare;
From the hawthorn's greenery
Sweet the thrush's call to thee,
And the skylark soaring high
Trills his anthem to the sky —
Lady Alice Courteney,
Fair are Devon fields in May!*

*See I from the turret-tower
Where my lady has her bower,
Far beyond the castle walls
Slope the green fields toward the south:
There thy river finds its mouth
And the great sea swells and falls,
There the salt white spray is thrown
O'er the rocks of Eddystone;
While above the curving bay
In its terraces of gray
Stern and stolid Plymouth town
Watches with ascetic frown
All that come and all that go
On the blue waves to and fro,
To the line of hills that rise*

*Faint against the southern skies,
Where the alien people be —
The white cliffs of Brittany!*

*All this have I seen today,
Lady Alice Courteney,
As it chanced thy Norman name
On the page before me came:
What but name is left to thee?
What is such a name to me?*

*Lady Alice Courteney,
Thou hast lived and loved for me.
(Fairer thou than any rose
That in Devon's Garden grows!)*
*Lady, thou wert made for Love,
Love had much to give to thee.
Through the long years coming, going,
Ever is thy lifeblood flowing
From the hearts of noble earls,
Through the veins of common churls,
Knight and lady, boor and clown,
As the ages follow down;
Of one blood the nations be,
Of one blood art thou with me!*

See the rush of history,
Strewn with cast-off finery,
And the way of common things,
Cluttered with the pomp of kings!

*Now in dim perspective seen
As the centuries roll away,
Generations vanishing
Move across the changing scene,
Knights and squires and men at arms,
Captains of the men-o'-war,
Masters of the Devon farms,
Priests and bishops here and there,
Puritan and Cavalier;
Some in silks and laces fine,
Some in simple hodden gray,
Children all of thee and thine,
Of thy blood of Courteney.*

Theirs the shame and glory set
In thy fame, Plantagenet!

*Once upon Saint Crispin's day
'Twas the blood of Courteney
Stained thy meadows, Agincourt!
Swiftly through the veins it flows
As the fire of battle glows;
Proudly when the Virgin Queen
Rode the loyal ranks between;
Sternly when at Marston Moor,
On the heath in supplicance kneeling,
Not to England's lord appealing,
But the Lord of Hosts before!*

*Men of Devon once fought on
Till a day and night were gone.*

*“What is one day less or more
On the sea or on the shore?”*

*The Revenge was but a wreck,
Broken, blood-washed was her deck:
“Sink her, split her sharp in twain,
Fall in God’s hands, master gunner,
Never into clutch of Spain!”*

*But at last the Dragon¹ came
Stinging, scorching far and near,
Blasting with his tongue of flame
The fair homes of Devonshire,
And hot feelings unsuppressed
Surged in every Devon breast
Till the signal in His name
“To the watching Pilgrims came.”
Then for home and conscience’ sake,
With the rest fled Goodman Drake,
That, God helping, o’er the sea
Build they a new England, free.*

*Grim, austere, and stern were they,
Errant sons of Courteney,
But free born, of hardy stock;
Never in the Pilgrim’s grave
Lay the weakling or the slave, —
Dust to dust, but rock to rock.*

¹ An allusion to the Dragon Persecution of Dissenters about the year 1600.

Whatsoe'er their rank or fame,
Lady Alice all must claim;
Lady, wouldst thy children scan,
Thou shalt see the Common Man.
As the centuries come and go,
Through their veins thy blood shall flow;
For the fairest Time has molded
Or in softest garments folded,
Comes at last in Nature's plan
To her simple Common Man.

*And thus hast thou come to me,
Lady Alice Courteney!*

St. Paul, Pribilof Islands, July 26, 1896

ON THE NORTH FORK

(THE KEEPER OF THE TOLLGATE SPEAKS)

*Well, yes, I knew him; forty years ago,
Or maybe thirty-five, he lived up here,
Up at the bluff above the old North Fork —
Michigan Bluff, we called it in those days;
He kept a miners' store — a stock in trade
Of odds and ends of all sorts. He was then
A sturdy fellow, full of schemes and plans,
But sticking like a bulldog, once they're made.*

*He never trusted to a turn of cards;
He spent his money only on his wife
And on his schemes, and somehow day by day
He seemed to cut a little wider swath.
But he was poor and none too proud at that,
For I have seen him with his loaded cart,
Driving along here on the rough red roads
That run through Placer County east and west
From Clipper Gap to Lone Star and beyond,
From Yuba Canyon on to Placerville.*

*We fellows laughed then at the pains he took
To balance up his books and square accounts.
With us, come easy — and it easy went.
The stream of gold dust from the old North Fork
Flowed in our pockets and flowed out again,
And left them just as empty as before.*

*But 'twas not so with him, sir. Not a thought
Of cards or wine or woman ever moved*

*His mind a moment from his purposes;
And everything he touched turned into gold.*

*So things went with him till one day he shook
The dust of Placer County from his feet,
And from the mountains down to town he went
To work at other, maybe bigger schemes;
And some one at the Bluff bought out his store.
And I grew tired at last of miners' fare,
Worn out with washing gold and waiting luck;
Washing for gold down there at Murderer's Bar,
Waiting for luck away up on Lone Star —
I came down here to where the Forks unite,
To this old bridge, and here for twenty years
I've taken toll from every passer-by.*

*I wash a little gold out day by day,
But mostly watch my river flowing by.
Good friends we are, the old North Fork and I;
I like to hear him 'neath his melting snows,
Calling the little brooks to follow him
As down he goes headforemost to the sea.
I watch the squirrels on the Digger pine
Hoarding up stores for days that never come.*

*I sit and see the seasons come and go,
The white cloak slipping from the mountain tops,
Edged with a fringe of milk-white waterfalls,
That fade away before the thirsty sun, —
When the green foothills change to gray and brown.
But best of all I love October days,*

*When the blue haze hangs over all the woods,
And the deep slopes flame out in red and gold,
As first the black oaks feel the touch of frost.*

*I love the live oaks too; they never change,
But stand out dark in sunshine as in storm; —
The only friends I have that do not change.*

*Even my river here, the old North Fork,
Is not the river that I used to know;
For piles of sand and gravel fill the bars,
Where grass and flowers grew to the water's edge
Back in the '50's when we both were young —
I and the river. Well, it seemed so then.
We both have had too much of mining camps;
No winter rains can wash their stains away.
Oh, yes; he built the railroad through these hills,
For luck stuck to him — he would not let go
When it came to him; that was just his way.
To some men luck comes once and not again,
To some men it comes once and stays with them
Because they never let it go.*

*They say he left his money to the world
And left the world forever richer for it;
It may be that's his luck — I do not know.
If so, the world is lucky.*

*There's the stage,
And you must go across to Placerville;
You should have been here thirty years ago*

*When Horace Greeley rode to Placerville
And Hank Monk held the ribbons.*

*What! You say
"Old Hank become a chestnut!" Well, goodbye.*

AULD MITHER SCOTIA

(On the 167th birthday of Robert Burns, January 25, 1926.)

*Eftsoons, across the cauld gray sea
Auld Mither Scotia ca's to me;
I turn mine eyes from verdant sward
To rude brown hills and peasant bard.*

*I see the frosty winter's moon
Glint o'er the hills o' Bonny Doon:
O'er Ailsa Craig the mistings drift;
Along the Ayr, their shadows shift;*

*I spoor my way amang the stanes
Along Maxwelton's daisied lanes;
I flit with warlocks, i' the murk,
By Alloway's auld haunted Kirk.
These heathered hills and glades amang,
Thy human-hearted poet sang.*

*The Castle of Montgomery
My waking eyes shall never see;
But all its banks and braes around
Forever shall be hallowed ground,
Sacred to love and simple faith,
Forever hallowed by them baith!*

MARY ATOLL (EQUATORIAL PACIFIC)

*I know a magic circle in the sea
Etched on the blue with pale gray coral sand;
A mountain sank there once amid the spray,
Its eddying circles stiffening into land
With lazy surges flapping on the strand.*

THE MATTERHORN

*Great, crumbling mountain of the rearing stag,
'Tis thus, O Matterhorn, thou seemst to me;
O Mons Cervinus, thou a stag must be
And crumbling, too, on each frost-bitten jag!
And I, once held by thee as in a hand
High overtopping loftiest Switzerland,
A tiny speck of life 'mid giants play,
As flooding tides may toss a fleck of foam!*

*Life is immortal! Thou must pass away,
The loftiest summit towers for but a day,
And I, undying, aeons hence shall come
To cast upon the spot where thou dost lie,
This for remembrance, fragrant rosemary!*

UNARMED AND UNAFRAID

*O thou blest land, America!
I look adown thy countryside,
And in the dawning glow of Peace,
I see thy landscape glorified.*

*Thy forests loftier rear their crests,
Thine eager rivers swifter flow,
While from thy hills of Hope and Faith,
Thy cleansing winds of Freedom blow.*

The Future beckons; may it be
The land where every dream comes true,
The land in which each humblest child
Shall live as free as I or you;

The favored land of noble youth,
The land where hatred dies away,
The land where each may know the truth;
The chosen land of Liberty!

*Erect, unarmed, and unafraid,
Thy children of the ages stand,
With Peace, her sheltering pinions spread,
North, South, East, West, above our land.*

*O speed the day when blood of man
No more shall drench the weary sod,
All joined in sacred brotherhood,
And every child a son of God —*

*When Peace with velvet-sandaled feet
Shall tread the Earth from shore to shore,
And peoples in the bond of love
Shall lust for conquest nevermore.*

L'ENVOI

The God of Bounds,
Who sets to seas a shore,
Came to me, on His rounds,
And said: "No more!"

—EMERSON

*And I made bold to answer:
"My work is only play;
'My Father worketh hitherto,'
And I must work today."*

—DAVID STARR JORDAN

January 19, 1926

